

Minutes
September 10, 2019

Present: Patrick Griffin (PG). Alvin Figiel (AF) and Dave Coppock (DC).

Also Present: Alderman Mattis, Tara Kelly, Planning Director and Zoning Administrator and Barbara Spaulding, recording secretary.

Absent: Susan Schreibman (SS) and Larry Walter (LW).

DC, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

- I. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS** – Alvin asked to add discussion of a proposed letter to Charter & Ordinance regarding internally illuminated signs.
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 14, 2019.**

PG moved to approve the minutes of August 14, 2019. AF seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – MPG Application and Resolution.

Tara distributed copies of the proposed scope of work for the City's Municipal Planning Grant application. It had been suggested by MPG staff that the City focus on one or two areas of concern with the draft zoning bylaws that would benefit from broader input and attention. Tara proposes one topic area is: The Gateway Corridors (Routes 4 and 7 primarily), as well as the historic districts and major corridors such as Strongs Avenue, State Street and West Street. This topic would also address Architectural Review and its role in shaping/influencing the design of buildings and properties.

The second topic addresses residential areas around downtown and while de-densifying has been the goal there are ways to regulate multi-family units that builds on the work done by NeighborWorks and Project Vision.

Tara said that by working through the major sticking points of the draft zoning before handing off the document to the Board of Aldermen will provide for a better transition and stronger position going forward through adoption.

AF asked if the proposed scope of work would be done by professionals. Tara discussed that such facilitators exist with the technical background necessary to also draft changes to the proposed zoning with information that would come out of discussions.

DC asked how the two issues were quantified. Tara gave an example of how at the last meeting the discussion of Architectural Design Review was handled with an all or

nothing approach. She said this type of approach won't work with other entities and needs conversation facilitated by a consultant with affected groups. Tara added that further discussion of the multi-family housing as drafted has needed additional reflection and input to better capture the concerns before handing it off to the Aldermen.

Alderman Mattis agreed that documenting discussion of the issues will make all the difference.

PG asked how the opinions of the public collected at the various public meetings will be addressed after the Aldermen receive the draft document. AF agreed that the process isn't flawless but things don't happen neatly.

Tara added that it is better to hammer through the issues before the Aldermen receive the draft document as evidenced by the problems the Charter & Ordinance Committee are currently having with the draft sign ordinance.

PG asked about the application timeline. Tara explained that the Aldermen will be asked to sign a resolution in support of the application at their next meeting Sept. 16. The deadline for the application is Oct. 1 and awards would be announced in December. The RFP would be posted in January and a consultant hired in March. PG said this would be a setback to the current schedule. AF said the Planning Commission could continue to work through the draft document while waiting for the consultant.

Alderman Mattis added that the two year span would not affect the Aldermen who will mostly be the same and the work would strengthen the draft quite a bit.

DC asked if Tiny Houses could be added to the scope of work. Tara said currently the zoning allows 400 sq. ft. primary dwelling. If the Commission wanted smaller they would need to determine whether it would be an accessory unit. This discussion could be incorporated into the scope of work, however the cost of the scope of work as written is already tight.

Following some procedural discussion, PG moved to authorize Susan, as Chair, to sign the resolution in support of the City's MPG application with the proposed scope of work. Motion passed unanimously.

V. OLD BUSINESS – Revised Sign Ordinance.

Alvin distributed copies of a proposed letter addressed to the Charter & Ordinance Committee regarding internally illuminated signs. He said he had heard from DC and read in the Herald that the Aldermen were not in favor of disallowing internally illuminated signs in all districts other than Downtown.

Alvin proposes that the Committee consider eliminating internally illuminated signs in districts where they currently do not exist: Historic, Residential, Main Street Park, Court House, Planned Office Park, Park and Gateway 1 & 2.

Alderman Mattis said the next step for Charter & Ordinance is to meet with sign professionals and that the proposed letter would be timely.

The Commission made some revisions to the letter and included the reasons behind their recommendations. PG moved to send the amended version of the letter to the Charter & Ordinance Committee. AF seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE – None.

VII. ADJOURN.

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 6:38 pm. The next meeting will be held September 25.

For the Commission:

Barbara Spaulding, Recording Secretary

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